

***Martin Van Buren the Musical: A Prospectus***

**An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)**

**by**

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## **Abstract**

The President of the United States of America is a coveted title in which billions of dollars is invested, yet there are presidents in this nation's past that go unnoticed. The eighth person to hold this title, Martin Van Buren, is relevant today in modern conceptualizations of the presidency and was largely disliked during his term from 1837 to 1841. I analyze the life of Martin Van Buren prior to his presidency to determine the factors that make a president a man like any other man. I write the prospectus for a musical including the outline and a few scenes to illustrate the potential for the musical to develop. I create a rendition of Van Buren's background that is reachable for all ages through the medium of a musical in its prospectus form.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Elizabeth Dalton for her help as an advisor, for her helpful deadlines, and her knowledge on the subject of creative writing. Without this support, I may still be attempting perfection in first drafts.

Thank you, Ball State University, for allowing me to approach this topic seriously. Even though theater and music composition are not my majors, this opportunity continues my academic research within a field of my personal interests.

Thank you to my mom, Jennifer Hawkins, who sparked the idea for the continuation of Martin Van Buren, and who used her New Year's 2019 wish to make this thesis conclude on a happy note.

Thank you to Dr. Bruce Geelhoed for his connections in the History Department and for his willingness to meet with me. Thank you to Dr. John Emert for his belief in me and for his suggestions for realistic goals. Thanks to Abby Black and Julia Robben for their advice in music and theater, respectively.

Thank you to Mr. Jacob Gilley and his proofreading staff who saw the first draft of this work, for *Wikipedia* for my original inspiration, and for my roommates who put up with my weird inspirational actions – we still have a pitcher of “Idea Water” in our fridge.

Finally, there is one person to whom I must admit I owe my entire project. I would like to thank my fiancé, Marshall David Claxton, whom I will marry in June 2019. His dedication to this project has been astounding. From listening to me read source books on car trips to hearing me rant about Martin Van Buren over the phone for hours, I have grown to really appreciate the interest this man takes in my academic life.

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## **Process Analysis Statement: A Topical Decision**

My selection of Martin Van Buren was coincidental. I owe the entire idea to the “Random Page” button on the sidebar of *Wikipedia*. It is crazy that I can attribute an entire college thesis to *Wikipedia*. I have real sources now – I promise.

The political scene in the years leading to Martin Van Buren’s presidency are not that far from today’s political scene. Van Buren saw the decline of small political factions; he saw the rise of Jacksonian Democracy. There were party ideology shifts that contributed to the social structure of our world. In the 1800s, politics played a role in local communities such as taverns. In 2019, we see this also, on social media platforms. These political shifts impact our friend groups, our stances on controversial topics, and our hobbies.

Martin Van Buren was not well liked by many biographers. His policies were abhorred, his personality was too strong, and he was short. These traits do not differ too much from the publicly perceived traits of our current president, whom many Americans dislike. Both presidents dealt with border issues; Martin Van Buren focused on Canadian relations, and Donald Trump’s platform is dealing with Mexican immigration. Despite political opinions, neither man is innately evil; they were liked enough to receive votes for presidency.

The more I delved into the life of Martin Van Buren, I realized that this musical was topical. 2019 is a year of understanding people and their backgrounds, their impacts, and their stories. *Martin Van Buren* is a story that is finally ready to be told, due to Americans’ ability to personally connect with the conflict one man endured.

## **Title**

I was initially afraid that naming this project *Van Buren* or *Martin Van Buren* might reflect a similarity to the musical *Hamilton*. As I looked into the story of Martin Van Buren, I realized that Alexander Hamilton was a patron of Abraham Van Buren's tavern. This aspect of the story created a connection that persuaded me to examine the musical *Hamilton* for what the American public values in this musical. I did not intend to recreate this musical in any way, but I became aware that there would inevitably be some similarities between the two shows.

I have chosen to focus the aptly named *Martin Van Buren* musical on the life of Martin leading up to his presidency to answer the ultimate research question: What makes a successful presidential leader? What qualities did Martin Van Buren possess, and what actions did he take, in his early life to secure him the presidency? How did his atmosphere in his Dutch community in New York influence his politics, and how did this contribute to his electoral win?

## **Finding Sources**

I realize that many of my sources are outdated. Outdated historical references on the United States presidents are cheap, easy to find, and contain a vast amount of insight into the life of Martin Van Buren at various stages throughout the past. I know that the way the story is told may change; early biographers may have despised the man, while more recent biographers take a lackadaisical approach to a man they have to include as "part of the big story." I need all of these outlooks to get a bias-limited view of my subject.

Before I knew it, every visit with my parents produced a book on the presidents. I found myself drowning in good resources, owning half of the collection that Bracken offers on Martin.

When I originally chose Martin Van Buren, the few sources available, according to citations on *Wikipedia*, persuaded me that there would be limited information to sort through, and perhaps this was what I originally desired. If there is little to be said, the rest is up to me! Unfortunately, every time I closed my eyes and reopened them, I found a new book mentioning Jacksonian democracy and a history of the presidents. Each promised a new fact, story, or tale that could play into my production. At this point, I became overwhelmed.

The most helpful books in the process of writing this thesis were *An Epoch and a Man* (Lynch), *Martin Van Buren* (Shepard), and *The Mothers of American Presidents* (Faber). These books provided substantial background on Van Buren's relationships, particularly with his family, that contributed to the context as well as the beginning scenes of the musical.

### **Learning Creativity**

One of the hardest lessons I learned in the process of writing *Martin Van Buren* was the acceptability of taking poetic license with historical facts. I have taken my history assignments seriously in school, so the idea of getting any detail incorrect mortified me. The sea of information on Martin Van Buren was overwhelming, and I knew that I could never become a master on everything that the man thought, ate, and lived. I needed to focus on big pictures and make the musical something that was still relevant to my audiences.

Another obstacle was boredom. I did not want my audience to feel that *Martin Van Buren* was a waste of time or energy; I needed to make my audience walk away feeling that they better understand the story while they have personal motivation for whatever they need to achieve in life.

In my first outline of *Martin Van Buren*, I ended the musical with Martin jumping onto an airplane to whisk him away to Italy, where his autobiography is penned. Problematically, airplanes were not invented until after the death of Martin, so this is not only an unlikely occurrence; it is downright wrong.

Prof. Dalton was the first person to suggest being open about anachronisms in my play. She suggested placing television sets in the tavern set, tuned to various news stations such as CNN and Fox. This anachronism connects with the audience, creates a full effect with the set buildings, and drives a contemporary political point about the nature of the scene.

This type of creativity allowed me to explore humor, as well. I did not recognize that such a serious matter would be good playing grounds for exploring humor. Originally, Martin and his family were stone-cold serious, but as I lightened up these characters, I grew to like them a little more. I realized that I could omit more historical detail and let the audience derive these from the human nature we are all familiar with.

### **The Tuckman Model**

While *Martin Van Buren* is not directly related to either my majors, I want to relate my process for writing a musical to a process I encounter in software development. The Tuckman Model is the circle-of-life for the development process (Tuckman and Jensen). This model is used frequently in the realm of software engineering and in government work. I have been fortunate to receive significant background on the model as it relates to my everyday decisions. I attended a lecture in Jersey City in March 2018 by David Largent, Assistant Lecturer of Computer Science at Ball State University. His research of the Tuckman Model convinced me to apply the concepts beyond the walls of computer science.



There are five stages in the model. Teams in the development process typically go through all five, and teams may transition from any one stage to any other. These stages are:

- Forming: the team is getting together; energy is high
- Storming: nothing is working out, the problem is being scoped; anger
- Norming: problem is accepted, work is made; everybody is still on edge
- Performing: everything is great, progress is happening, etc.; happy!
- Adjourning: wrap up the problem and celebrate.

One principle frequently seen in software development is the Pareto Principle, named for Vilfredo Pareto, which states 20 percent of the work takes 80 percent of the time (Reh). The Pareto Principle suggests any long-term project will not spend its lifetime in the performing phase; the project is bound to have time spent in the storming and norming phases of this cycle. I spent the entire first semester in the storming phase.

My forming phase came before I even fathomed this project would result in a thesis. I gathered my initial resources out of genuine interest, I made the list of songs to entertain myself and provide humor to others, and I was knowledge hungry. These are attributes of the forming phase.

When I entered the first semester of my senior year, deadlines crept up on me. I found myself stuck on the idea that I didn't know anything. During the forming stage, my lack of knowledge didn't matter. Now that I was obligated to get words on paper, I needed to know a good background. It felt wrong to make songs and rhymes about unknowns. I struggled with this reality for an entire semester.

My bi-weekly meetings with Professor Elizabeth Dalton helped, but only in some ways. These provided me with deadlines and forced me to create progress. It felt very forced. The two days before each of these meetings created substantial anxiety. I would enter the norming phase, if for a second, to compose a few lines, read a few pages, and attend the meeting with nothing to show. Professor Dalton was a cheerleader for me in these moments, and I realized that telling people about my ambitious goals made me want to achieve them – but only want to. I still could not find the motivation to put my ego, my perfectionism, aside and just *write*.

### **Music Composition**

The software that was used for music composition is MuseScore 3, version 3.0.5.21343, which is available for free download from Google Chrome. I used a 2015 MacBook Air. I chose MuseScore because I had a brief introduction to this software in a music theory class that I took in high school in Spring 2014. My brief introduction did not prepare me to begin using this product again. I struggled to remember which buttons allowed me to enter notes without adjusting all the previously inserted notes. I became familiar with how to insert lyrics into the staff bars.

For my prospectus, I expected to write some bars of music to become familiar with what themes I would be using, but I did not realize how hard it is to transcribe music that is mentally written. I had issues with lining up notes of different lengths in this program, and I could not find the right documentation to help me with this.

One of my favorite aspects of MuseScore is the playback functionality. I could hear what note I was writing as I wrote. Unfortunately, I could not get the coda and repeats to play in the digital format as I wished. I can only hope that whoever takes this project on next will be

familiar enough with music to follow the roadmap that is established through the miscellaneous repeats and D.S. markings.

I have finished the first song, “The Tavern Song,” for *Martin Van Buren*, and it is more than seven minutes in length, disregarding some of the repeated sections. I used some repeated musical phrases to show repetition and a common theme, while I used a different theme once Martin came into the scene to show a tense environment. I chose to use dissonance. I love dissonance, yet I did receive some disapproval from friends for my decision. To me, the tavern scene requires dissonance. The Van Buren family celebrates politics in a noisy, intimate tavern setting. The music is provided by a single on-set piano. This scene would require dissonance due to the noisy atmosphere and the imperfections of the pianist.

For key signature, I chose to write in D, which features two sharps. I personally like this key, because it is used in many orchestral settings. If I were to add more instrumentation, I would choose a fiddle or a stringed instrument, so this would be an appropriate choice of key. I inverted the key so that A was the primary root for most of my chords. This also conforms to the voice ranges that I plan to use for the characters. My time signature is 4/4, or common time.

## **Results and Future Work**

I wrote an outline for *Martin Van Buren* complete with scene descriptions. I have fully developed the “Tavern Scene,” and I have plans to further develop other scenes. The “Tavern Scene” is complete with a cast lineup, set sketches, and music. I decided that *Martin Van Buren* belongs in a small black-box theater with a single piano providing all accompaniment. My rationale for this choice is that the small environment allows proximity for the audience to personally connect with the story. Through further efforts, I could see *Martin Van Buren*

incorporating the audience as dinner theaters might, with the audience being elemental to the tavern scene. This is future work.

The story arc takes the audience through the life of Martin Van Buren leading up to his presidency. I chose to focus on what makes a man successful rather than his success. I am hoping to answer the question, “What makes an individual capable of becoming a presidential candidate?” The story arc consists of ten scenes that I consider to be crucial to the development of Martin Van Buren’s political career. The story begins with a 10-year-old Martin and progresses through his early law and political career prior to his presidency. I chose to address issues from Martin Van Buren’s background in Old Kinderhook, New York. I want the audience to see how his family and the Dutch community paved the path and created a strong work ethic that Van Buren took with him into his presidency. I end *Martin Van Buren* with an epilogue featuring a 75-year-old Martin reflecting on his choices in his early life. At the end, Martin has endured his presidency and the loss of many figures in his life. It is essential to conclude this play with a reminiscing scene, because Martin Van Buren concluded his life by writing his autobiography.

The scenes take place on two different sets, the Tavern and the Law Office. The Tavern is also used for the home scene and the law office is also used for the politician’s office. I chose to begin the musical in the Tavern. Martin’s first immersions in politics were through his father’s tavern, so immersing the audience in a quick view of politics in the 1800s sets the expectations for the story for both the audience and Martin. In this scene, I also introduce Andrew Jackson, in whose office Martin will later serve as vice president. I chose to introduce these characters at the beginning, because the audience will be expecting them.

From the Tavern, the audience is transitioned to the Law Office. A teenage Martin shows his first signs of political promise, although his education is far from over. The audience is transitioned back to the Tavern, where Martin is shown falling in love with Hannah Van Goes. I wanted to show Martin's personal relationships, because these are relatable and tragic. Martin's marriage to Hannah in 1807 affects his attitude towards his political and personal life. After Hannah's death in 1819, author Nigel Cawthorne reveals that Martin may relate more to his father than to his mother (Cawthorne 68). Van Buren's mother was caring and nurturing, while his father was reckless and married late in life (Faber).

After the introduction of Hannah, the next three scenes focus on political campaigns and actions that Martin participated in. I focus on his parents' influence on his local political career, his community's influence on his senate and congressional career, and finally the nation's influence on his vice presidency. These scenes show the transitional ladder that Martin is climbing towards the presidency. The importance of this ladder hopefully will encourage audience members to take small actions towards larger goals. Even a president had to begin his career on a smaller scale. The early political engagements in Martin Van Buren's life include delegation to the Republican Congressional Caucus in 1800 and Surrogate of Columbia County in 1808 (Sloan 1-2). Van Buren was elected to the New York State Senate in 1812, the United States Senate in 1821, and the governorship of New York in 1828 (Sloan 2-8). Van Buren was elected vice president under Andrew Jackson in 1832 (Sloan 10).

The climax of the musical occurs when Martin becomes abundantly confident in his career abilities and accepts an offer to duel from John Sudam. This happened November 25, 1811 (Sloan 2). Duels were common in the early nineteenth century. Van Buren's acceptance might have been to prove his political abilities or to defend his law career against an opponent in

his field. Van Buren saw his opponent's ultimate withdrawal from the duel as a political win, which suggests that despite their common background in the profession of law, the duel had political intentions. I will illustrate that Martin was willing to risk human lives for his political career, and this feeling will carry over into the next scene – a tragedy. The life that Martin never expected to lose in this ordeal was that of his beloved wife, Hannah. This occurred February 5, 1819 (Sloan 4).

After tragic loss, Martin must bounce back at the end of the musical. I show this through a comeback scene, “Martin’s Comeback” which features the tune, “I’m Gonna Be O.K. (Reprise).” The term “O.K.” or colloquially “okay” reportedly comes from Martin Van Buren’s campaign. O.K. stands for Old Kinderhook, which is where Martin Van Buren originated. I wanted to incorporate the miscellaneous facts about Martin’s life into the musical, and this was one easy way to accomplish this.

Throughout writing the musical, I learned a lot about my ability to research. I learned that the number of sources does not matter if the sources are not significantly valuable to the research. I recognized bias in many sources, and I learned ways to balance this out by thinking of how the authors’ backgrounds contributed to their views of Martin Van Buren. The biggest lesson I learned was creative liberty, and that I do not need to incorporate every detail. Storytellers focus on what the audience wants and needs to hear, and I could do this with Martin Van Buren’s story, also. I became cognizant of what facts were being skewed in my own storytelling and how I could use those to tell a better story.

I did not know that Martin Van Buren held so many political offices. He progressed very far in his lifetime, and honestly, I do not know where he found the time to raise a family and have such a big impact on politics. I did not realize how different the world is today compared to

how it was in the early 1800s. I struggled with anachronisms. I learned the value of family has been a consistent theme. Martin Van Buren relied on his family for much of his career success, just as I have done. As with Martin Van Buren, I am going to be O.K.

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## **The Outline**

### **Cast**

Young Martin – age 10

Teenage Martin – age 17

Old Martin – age 75

Abraham Van Buren

Maria Van Hoes Van Buren

Hannah Van Goes

Andrew Jackson

Chorus Members (includes Troops, Hamilton, Burr, Lawyers)

### **Scenery**

Set 1: Tavern

Bar stools, Old, secluded house with log walls, trees outside. Lots of clinking bronze steins.

Also use for home with Hannah (slightly altered)

Set 2: Law office

Small office scattered with old parchment.

Also use for politician office space.

### **Overture**

Curtain down. Piano playing. Possibly fiddle accompaniment.

### **Scene I: The Tavern Scene**

Cast: Young Martin, Abraham, Maria, Jackson, Chorus

Scenery: Tavern

Premise: Martin is introduced to politics in his father's tavern. Key political figures are ushered in, including Alexander Hamilton, Aaron Burr, and Andrew Jackson. Each of these figures played a role in Martin Van Buren's political interests.

Songs: "The Tavern Song," "Enter Mr. Jackson"

### **Scene II: Lawyer Apprenticeship**

Cast: Teenage Martin, Chorus

Scenery: Law Office

Premise: Martin's education has won him a law apprenticeship. Over the course of this scene, Martin progresses in his career from a clerk for William P. Van Ness as a young boy with shabby clothing to a professional partner in his half-brother's law firm.

Song: "Possibly Political"

### **Scene III: Love with Hannah**

Cast: Teenage Martin, Hannah, Abraham, Maria

Scenery: Tavern (altered)

Premise: Martin and his cousin Hannah express a childhood love for each other that ultimately culminates in their marriage. Abraham and Maria bless this union in traditional Dutch.

Songs: "Hannah's Proposal," "The O.K. Wedding"

#### **Scene IV: Local Politics**

Cast: Teenage Martin, Abraham, Maria, Jackson, Chorus

Scenery: Law Office (altered)

Premise: Martin engages in local political offices with his parents' support. This scene will also include the "Cow Case" that was brought up in his early political career. Martin Van Buren's early political career includes roles as a delegate and a surrogate for his county.

Songs: "I'm Gonna Be O.K.," "The Cow Case"

#### **Scene V: Senate and Congress Elections**

Cast: Teenage Martin, Chorus

Scenery: Law Office (altered)

Premise: Urged by his community, Martin attempts to secure senate and governor seats. He is successful in securing a seat for the New York Senate, for the New York governorship, and eventually for the United States Senate.

Songs: "My Brother, My Senator," "The Ladder of Success"

#### **Scene VI: Vice President**

Cast: Teenage Martin, Jackson, Chorus

Scenery: Law Office (altered)

Premise: Martin accepts an offer from Andrew Jackson to be his vice president. An overview of Jackson's presidency is quickly shown, through wartimes and the foundation of the Democratic party.

Song: "Democratic Party Time"

### **Scene VII: The Duel**

Cast: Martin (aged around 30), Chorus

Scenery: Tavern

Premise: A cocky (and slightly hopeless) Martin accepts an offer to a duel with lawyer John Sadam to prove his political presence. He is in complete despair at career losses, and he is willing to fight to the death. The opponent backs out. Reveals complete chaos in his life.

Song: “A Duel is Due”

### **Scene VIII: The Loss of His Wife**

Cast: Martin (aged around 38), Hannah

Scenery: Tavern (altered)

Premise: Martin is losing control of his emotions and political career, and his wife passes away of tuberculosis. This is an emotionally charged scene. Martin stays by her as the spotlight fades.

Song: “Willing To Die”

### **Scene IX: Martin’s Comeback**

Cast: Old Martin

Scenery: Tavern (altered)

Premise: Martin finds composure and motivation to continue living as he is asked to run for president. He realizes that politics has always been a true love for him, and that he will be able to persevere with the help of his associates. He decides to run for the presidential office after all.

Song: “I’m Gonna Be O.K. (Reprise)”

## **Scene X: The Aftermath**

Cast: Old Martin, Young Martin, Teenage Martin, Hannah

Scenery: Tavern

Premise: Martin writes his autobiography. Martin counts his losses, relationships, and the presidency. He is now resilient.

Song: “Martin Van Buren [Finale]”

## Scene I. The Tavern Scene

In “The Tavern Scene,” the audience gets a glimpse at life in the early 1800s through the tavern of Abraham Van Buren, Martin’s father. The audience meets historical and political figures who had real connections with the Van Buren tavern and family. The audience also begins to understand the family tension between Martin’s parents, Abraham and Maria. Maria Van Hoes Van Buren prioritizes Martin’s education over his political exposure at the tavern, while Abraham believes that his son can learn valuable lessons in the tavern. “The Tavern Song” addresses a rotation of political figures through the tavern and shows how Martin is torn between the two opinions of his parents.

The second song, “Enter Mr. Jackson,” is the cumulative result of this scene, to show how Martin has chosen a career in politics. Martin Van Buren only had an 8th-grade education, which was common for the early 1800s. His choice to pursue politics and law was not uncommon given his upbringing at the tavern. I chose to have Andrew Jackson enter the scene with a tap dancing battle to illustrate his warfighting strategies and also his fierce political nature. His invitation to Martin is to accept his invitation to enter this lifestyle alongside him.

One of the battles faced in writing the initial scene is the culture of a Dutch tavern. The Van Buren family spoke Dutch at home. I also was not aware of the servants and slaves that the Van Buren household kept. I included a slave in this scene for historical relevance, and her character is the catalyst for the entry of the political figures into the tavern. The phrase, “zet wat meer houtblokken op het vuur” is spoken to the slave by Abraham Van Buren during “The Tavern Song.” This phrase, according to Google Translate, translates to “put more logs on the fire.” As Dutch would be common lingo, I wanted to include some phrases, yet I did not want to

put too much trust in Google Translate. I will likely expand upon the Dutch fragments in *Martin Van Buren* as I progress through the musical.

### **The Tavern Song**

*Abraham.*

Welcome Montresor, I see you heeded the snow.

The 15<sup>th</sup> of December, and it's cold, I should know.

The troops of our George are marching in,

So spend the night while it snows again.

*Colonel James Montresor.*

Thank you, Abraham, that's really quite sincere.

I haven't been to Old Kinderhook in many years.

When I set forth for George as the Chief Engineer,

I always receive the best tavern service here.

*Slave.*

The fire is dying,

It's so chilly in here.

*Abraham.*

“zet wat meer houtblokken

op het vuur”

*Chorus.*

Because it's politics all day -

*Slave.*

And it's politics all night.

*Abraham et.al.*

At Abraham Van Buren's bar

We love to pick a fight

*Abraham.*

Alexander Hamilton, welcome to New York.

Here's today's special, here's a spoon and a fork.

Tell me about the weather, Is it mist?

And how goes life with the party Fed'ralists?

*Alexander Hamilton.*

Thank you, Abraham, things have progressed quite well.

The weather's like those Dem'crat-Republicans - hell.

I'll buy you a drink if you sit with me, sir,

While I wait for my friend-in-duel, Sir Aaron Burr.

*Chorus.*

Because it's politics all day -



*Slave.*

And it's politics all night

*Abraham et.al.*

At Abraham Van Buren's bar

We love to pick a fight

*Chorus.*

All the politics, all the drinks,

Let's see what's next in store!

*Abraham.*

Here he comes, Here he slinks,

It's Mister Aaron Burr!

*Abraham.*

Burr, let us talk politics, as you take off your coat.

I am now aware you think the Fed'ralists do gloat.

What party do you fancy, even to the death?

Or some decent quality, When you have nothing left?

*Aaron Burr.*

I see, Van Buren, at the door - that Hamilton is near.

With him in mind, I cannot lie, I pay a special ear

Let's ruffle, you say, and bear in tow,

The earnings of a careless foe

We'll give in to him with a gracious show...

I may give you the duel of the year!

*Chorus.*

Because it's politics all day -

*Slave.*

And it's politics all night

*Abraham et.al.*

At Abraham Van Buren's bar

We love to pick a fight

*Abraham.*

Martin is next to come back to me.

He's been back at school, so melancholy.

He talks of class, he tells me he's free.

I know he's constrained by his geometry.

*Martin.*

Oh, my books! My books are falling!

*Abraham.*

Yes, my son, you're just a boy.

Maria thinks you need education,

While being here won't keep you coy

*Martin.*

My books, my books!

*Abraham.*

Here at the tavern, you will meet some men,

Some politic-speaking, some rough, gentlemen.

Here at the tavern, you will meet some boys,

Some rattled and tattled, not sweet little boys.

Here at the tavern, you will meet some noise,

Here at the tavern, you will make a choice -

Federalist, Whig, or the new Democrat -

*Martin.*

Democrat? What is that?

*Abraham.*

The knowledge you get here is all in your head,  
While my servants will bake you a nice little bread  
And Maria's concern will get you educated instead,  
But the real world experience is now being fed.

*Martin.*

Here, let me help, as I'm learning so much,  
I'll grow up here and see that I've got a gentleman's punch.  
I'll wrestle and discern with the manliest men,  
And I'll get up and get down and get round again,

*Abraham.*

Let's talk politics, son,  
Let's talk politics.

*Maria.*

What are you doing? You're not studying well,  
And I know in your studies you're starting to spell,  
All the wisdom and knowledge in English and Dutch  
To the slave and the poor of our small tender hutch

*Martin.*

I am finding supplements to my good education,  
While the Dutch find some hope in a new generation

*Maria.*

It still is not cheap to finance your career  
But the value of school is worth every year

*Abraham.*

How can you say the tavern won't teach Martin the life  
Of a true politician by day and by night

*Maria.*

As if president were a true goal for his mind,  
With a senator brother, just one of his kind.

*Abraham.*

Then the path is ensembled, and he's ready to follow

*Maria.*

He's now only ten, so don't find he's so callow

*Martin.*

With all due respect, I've decided to motion  
Towards all the political, deep, spying commotion

*Martin.*

And ask Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Burr,

Why it's politics I should aim for.

When my brother is here, I will ask for his sight

Into whether I'm handling my future right

When he tells me I'm ready, I'll jump for the stars,

and I'll shoot out my wisdom like runaway cars

*Abraham.*

What's a car?

*Martin.*

And I'm going to be okay,

I'll be okay,

And the politics will only help me this way.

*Maria.*

I'll continue to fund your real education

As a child you'll be guided by destination

*Abraham.*

As an apprentice, perhaps you will learn some law

*Martin.*

Then I will have a resource from which to draw

*Chorus.*

Welcome to Martin Van Buren's tavern,

Here we can offer all you care to learn.

With your school books in hand, here's a favor

Your life is now taking a breathtaking turn.

*Abraham.*

Pour all another round!

*Chorus.*

Because it's politics all day -

*Slave.*

And it's politics all night

*Abraham et.al.*

At Abraham Van Buren's bar

We love to pick a fight!

*Slave.*

Another face is at the window,

And his face is growing grim

As he tries to grip the pane now,

Abraham, shall he come in?

**Enter Mr. Jackson**

*Maria exits stage left, Abraham/Martin center stage, Chorus in back, drinking/talking*

*Background music patriotic, ala 1812 overture*

*American flag drops down, vertical, center stage (backdrop)*

*Same time (or soon after): Stage right door opens, one-by-one, six soldiers walk in.*

*The first three march towards the flag, stop and roll through to stage left.*

*The second three march and return towards the door.*

*Lightning crashes. Jackson marches in, center stage (forward)*

*The slave/soldiers shut the door with force*

*Wave of sound, quieting as Jackson passes, from chorus/soldiers*

Chorus:

Wow, it's Andrew Jackson!

Old Hickory!

It's the face of Democracy himself!

He's going to be president one day, I can feel it.

I love a campaign for my fellow men.

What a role model!

What a man!

Jackson, you've won my heart! - My vote!

*Jackson walks to stage left, back to stage right, stage center.*

*Starts motioning to chorus members, dividing them right and left*



Jackson: *Commanding shift in mood, spoken.*

Friends of my ideals, enemies wearing heels, good will upon you all.

Please leave Jackson, you have no business here.

*Silence as the anthem stops.*

*Tap dance war between right and left (shoes silenced until this point).*

*A few members stay at the bar and clank their steins on metal plates.*

*Abraham and Martin have taken shelter back, center stage, spotlight not on them.*

*Jackson is conducting the tap dance war.*

*---tap dance war--- (think Irish jig meets Panic! at the Disco but a little more patriotic)*

*After everybody is exhausted, they relax, Martin and Abraham come towards Jackson.*

Martin:

Put me in politics, sir, I'm neither a friend nor a foe.

Put me in politics, sir, I'll cause you no worry or woe.

I come from a good education, I'm learning the reasons for law.

I come from a tavern vocation, I'm both a sigh and hurrah.

Jackson:

The Democrat party is today recruiting

A new party platform up for disputing

If I could introduce to you to why we are rooting  
For change in the world, with so much diluting.

We need young minds to form our platform

Are you up for joining in our plans

The existing parties needed strong reform

Martin Van Buren, a symbol of the lands

*Takes Martin by the shoulder and surveys the stage with an outreached arm*

Martin:

I'm in!

*Stage goes dark.*

## Music for Scene I. The Tavern Scene

## The Tavern Song

Anna C Hawkins

Anna C Hawkins

♩ = 120

Wel - come Mon - tres - sor,  
The fif - teen of Dec - em - ber,  
Al - ex - and - er Ham - il - ton,  
Here's to - day's spec - ial,

I see you heed - ed the snow,  
and it's cold, I should know.  
wel come to New York.  
here's a spoon and a fork.

The troops of our George are march - ing in,  
So spend the night while it snows a - gain.  
Tell me ab - out the weath - er, Is it mist?  
And how goes life with par - ty Fed - 'ral - ists?

Thank you, Ab - ra - ham,  
I have - n't been to  
Thank you, Ab - ra - ham,  
The weath - er's like those

14

that's real - ly quite sin - cere. When I set forth  
Old Kind - er - hook in many years. I al - ways re -  
things have pro - gressed quite well, I'll buy you a  
Dem - 'crat Rep - ub - li - cans, hell. While I wait for

16

To Coda

for George as the Chief En - gin - eer,  
ceive the best tav - ern ser - vice here,  
drink if you sit with me, sir,  
my friend - in - duel, Sir Aar - on Burr.

20

The fire is dy - ing, it's so chil - ly in here.  
Zet wat meer hout - blok - ken, op het vuur.

25

Chorus

Be - cause it's pol - it - ics all day,  
And it's pol - it - ics all night.

28 D.S. al Coda

At Ab - ra - ham Van Bur - en's bar, we love to pick a fight!

31

All the pol - it - ics, all the drinks, Let's see what's next in store!  
Here he comes, here he slinks, It's Mis - ter Aar - on Burr!

35

Burr, let us talk pol - it - ics,  
I am now a - ware you think

38

as you take off your coat. What par - ty do you fan - cy,  
the Fed - 'ral - ists do gloat. Of some dec - ent qua - lit - y,

40

ev - en to the death?  
When you have no - thing left?

43

I see, Van Bur - en, at the door - that Ham - il - ton is near.  
 With him in mind, I can - not lie, I pay a spec - ial ear.

46

Let's ruf - fle and say, and bear in tow, I may  
 The earn - ings of a care - less foe  
 We'll give in to him with grac - 'ous show

49

To Chorus

give you the duel of the year!

53

Mar - tin is next to come back to me. My books!  
 He's been at school, so mel - an - cho - ly.  
 He talks of class, he tells me he's free.  
 I know he's con - strained ge - o - met - try.

*Repeat 3 times*

56

My books are fal-ling! Yes, my son, you are just a boy  
 Mar - i - a thinks you need ed' - cat - ion!  
 School will not keep you ve - ry coy.

59

My books, my books!

62

Here at the tav - ern, you will meet some men.  
 Pol - it - ic speak - ing, some rough gent - le - men.  
 Here at the tav - ern, you will meet some boys.  
 Rat - tled and tat - tled not sweet lit - tle boys.

*Repeat 3 times*

64

Here at the tav - ern you will hear some noise. Dem - o - crat, oh what is  
 Here at the tav - ern you will make a choice.  
 Fed - ral - ist, Whig, or the new Dem - o - crat?

*Repeat 2 times*

67

that?

The know - ledge you get here is all  
 While our help will bake you a nice  
 Her con - cern gets you ed - u - cat -  
 The real world ex - per - i - ence is

*Repeat 3 times*

72

in your head.  
 lit - tle bread.  
 ed in - stead.  
 tav - ern fed.

75

Here, let me help as I'm learn - ing so much.  
 Af - ter all, I have a gent le - man's punch.  
 I'll wrest - le and dis - cern with man - ly men  
 I'll get up and get down and 'round a - gain.

*Repeat 3 times*

77

Pol - it - ics, son, pol - it - ics!



80

Oh what are you do - ing You're not stu - dy - ing well,  
 And I know in your stu - dies You're star - ting to spell,  
 All the wis - dom and know - ledge in Eng - lish and Dutch,  
 To the slave and the poor of our poor ten - der hutch.

*Repeat 3 times*

82

I'm find - ing sup - ple - ments to my good ed - u - cat - ion,  
 While the Dutch find some hope in a new gen - er - at - ion,  
 It still is not cheap to fin - ance your car - eer,  
 But the val - ue of school is worth ev - er - y year.

*Repeat 3 times*

85

How can you say the tav - ern won't teach Mar - tin the life?  
 Of a true pol - it - ic - ian by day and by night.

87

As if pre - si - dent were a true goal for his mind,  
 With a sen - a - tor bro - ther, just one of a kind.

89

The path is en - semb - led, he's read - y to fol - low.  
He's now on - ly ten, so don't find he's so cal - low.

92

With all due res - spect, I've de - cid - ed to mo - tion.  
To all the pol - lit - ic - al, cra - zy com - mo - tion.

95

And ask Mis - ter Ham - il - ton and Mis - ter Burr,  
When my bro - ther is here, I'll ask for his sight.  
When he tells me I'm read - dy, jump for the stars.

*Repeat 2 times*

97

Why it's pol - it - ics  
If I'm hand - le - ing  
I'll shoot out wis - dom like  
I should aim for.  
my fut - ure right.  
run - a - way cars.  
What's a car?

100

I'm gon-na be ok - ay! I'm gon - na be

104

ok - ay. And pol - it - ics will on - ly help me this way.

108

I'll con - tin - ue to fund your real ed - u - cat - ion.  
My chi - ld, you'll be guid - ed by dest - in - at - ion.  
As an ap - pren - tice, you will learn some law,  
Then I'll have some res - source from which I can now draw.

*Repeat 3 times*

110

Wel - come to Mar - tin Van Bur - en's tav - ern.  
With your school books in hand, here's a fav - or.

114

Here we can of-fer all you care to learn. Pour all a-not-her round!  
Your life is now tak ing a breath tak-ing turn.

117

Be-cause it's pol - it - ics all day,  
And it's pol - it - ics all night.

121

At Ab - ra - ham Van Bur - en's bar, we love to pick a fight!

124

An - ot - her face is at the wind ow, And his face is grow-ing grim!

128

As he tries to grip the pane now, Ab-ra-ham, shall he come in?

132

The musical score consists of two staves, treble and bass, in the key of D major (two sharps). Measure 132: The treble staff contains a quarter note D5, a quarter note E5, a quarter note F#5, a quarter note G5, a quarter note A5, a quarter note B5, and a quarter rest. The bass staff contains a whole note chord of D4, F#4, and A4. Measure 133: The treble staff contains a quarter note G5, a quarter note F#5, a quarter note E5, a quarter note D5, a quarter note C#5, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note A4. The bass staff contains a whole note chord of D4, F#4, and A4. Measure 134: The treble staff contains a whole note chord of D5, F#5, and A5. The bass staff contains a whole note chord of D4, F#4, and A4. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

### Scene III. Love with Hannah

In this scene, Martin Van Buren develops his feelings for his cousin, Hannah, with whom he has grown up. His feelings are childlike, and Hannah is initially hesitant to accept his love and proposal due to his underdeveloped feelings for her. She decides to give in, and wholeheartedly gives herself to him on the condition that he will be her entire life. Martin is unsure of this and begins to waver. He fears that he will become like his father, whose marriage is affected by character differences. Martin Van Buren is worried that he will not marry until he is old, like his father did, unless he rushes into his feelings with Hannah. He begins to second guess himself, but then falls whole-heartedly into the arrangement. Hannah accepts his proposal, and Martin's father and mother provide their blessing for the wedding.

### Hannah's Proposal

[The set is the altered tavern scene]

*Martin.* [running out to meet Hannah, waiting alone]

Jannetje, oh Jannetje.

I met you one summer,

The weather was fine.

I courted you hither,

With bread and sweet wine.

We loved once as children,

I think you're divine.  
I find you forbidden,  
Oh won't you be mine?

*Hannah.* [holding Martin's hand]

Martin, oh Martin.

I'd love to, dear cousin.  
I'll stand by your side.  
I'll leave you for nothing,  
My arms open wide.

Think rationally, dear.  
You're older than nine.  
We are not children,  
And I am not fine.

I believe that you love me  
Because from your youth,  
You met no one else  
Who would tell you the truth!

When your hair was too scruffy,

Your clothes were all worn.  
I mended your jacket  
When the buttons were torn.

*Martin.*

Be with me, I beg you,  
And marry me soon.  
Love, but there are few  
Who know me like you.

Hannah, oh Hannah, will I be blessed?

*Hannah.*

Martin, oh Martin, a resounding yes.

But now that we're older,  
I think I deserve  
That you listen and care  
For a partner you'll serve

Whole-heartedly always,  
And with me, besides  
You'll be my whole life,



Until death, we will confide.

*Martin.*

No, wait, you had me down.

I don't believe I could do that.

I think about my father,

And how his word fell flat.

I think about my mother,

The poor mother of five.

If only she knew of

The man she would wive.

I am too much like him,

My father, you see.

I could treat you

Abominably.

Then again, I am like half

Of how my father raised me.

Because my mother cared,

And I could love you crazy.

We can have a family of our own.

We can laugh until we are grown.

I never knew another woman like you.

Jannetje, Jannetje, oh won't you be true?

*Hannah.*

I am being true.

I deeply love you.

How could I refuse this man,

Who always can understand?

*Martin.*

Hannah, oh Hannah.

Please be my wife.

*Hannah.*

Martin, oh Martin.

I'll be yours for life!

## Appendix A. Annotated Bibliography

Butler, William Allen. *Martin Van Buren: Lawyer, Statesman and Man*. Forgotten Books, 2015.

Butler's reprinted classic provides a short biography on the life of Martin Van Buren. Butler focuses on Van Buren's career as a lawyer and as an early politician.

Cawthorne, Nigel. *Sex Lives of the U.S. Presidents*. Prion, 2004.

Cawthorne addresses the personal relationship between Hannah Hoes Van Buren and Martin Van Buren on pages 68 through 75. He does not provide many sources and includes many rumors and speculations, such as whether Martin Van Buren was a closeted homosexual. Cawthorne's book is helpful in identifying potential weaknesses in Van Buren's marriage, but contains questionable authority on the subject matter.

Curtis, James C. *The Fox at Bay: Martin Van Buren and the Presidency, 1837-1841*. The University Press of Kentucky, 1970.

Curtis's book is one of the most recognizable titles about Martin Van Buren's presidency. Curtis focuses on Van Buren's strategies for warfare and politics. This book was not referenced extensively for this project but would serve as a good resource for the continuation of this musical.

Faber, Doris. *The Mothers of American Presidents*. New American Library, 1968.

Faber addresses the parental roles that Maria and Abraham Van Buren played in the raising of Martin Van Buren and his siblings. This book was useful in "The Tavern Scene," which shows the tension between education and politics that Martin faced in his early life.

Freidel, Frank. *Our Country's Presidents*. National Geographic Society, 1966.

The National Geographic Society's collection on presidents includes a short biography of Martin Van Buren, which was useful in corroborating historical facts.

Gardner, John. *The Art of Fiction: Notes on Craft for Young Writers*. Vintage, 1991.

Gardner's book was useful in further research to develop the story arc.

Lynch, Denis Tilden. *An Epoch and a Man: Martin Van Buren and His Times*. Horace Liveright, 1929.

Lynch's book provides extensive detail on Martin Van Buren's childhood, adolescence, and early life. Lynch's book has been the primary source of material for this musical. The material is easily accessible to the reader, and illustrations are included to show scenery. This book contains information on Abraham Van Buren's tavern and on the Cow Case, a unique political lawsuit involving Martin Van Buren.

MacGregor, Jerry and Marie Prys. *Faith of the First Ladies*. Baker Books, 2006.

MacGregor and Prys address the faith of the first ladies. Although Hannah Hoes Van Buren was never a first lady, she is often depicted as a good Christian woman, strong in her faith. This book corroborates and explains the details of this description.

Metcalf, Allan. *OK: The Improbable Story of America's Greatest Word*. Oxford University Press, 2011.

Metcalf's work addresses the popular rumor that Martin Van Buren is responsible for the origins of the phrase "O.K." This idea contributed to the theme, "I'm Gonna Be O.K." in *Martin Van Buren*.

Meyers, Marvin. *The Jacksonian Persuasion: Politics & Belief*. Vintage Books, 1960.

Meyers focuses on the early career of Martin Van Buren as vice president under Andrew Jackson in the beginning years of the Democratic party.

Niven, John. *Martin Van Buren: The Romantic Age of American Politics*. Oxford University Press, 1983.

Niven's book addresses the political life of Martin Van Buren and includes illustrations and photographs.

Parsons, Lynn Hudson. *The Birth of Modern Politics: Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams, and the Election of 1828*. Oxford University Press, 2009.

Parsons focuses on the early career of Martin Van Buren as vice president under Andrew Jackson in the beginning years of the Democratic party.

Reh, F. John. "Pareto's Principle or the 80/20 Rule." *The Balance Careers*,

<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/pareto-s-principle-the-80-20-rule-2275148>, 22 Mar 2019.

Reh's webpage was used for reference in the Pareto Principle, as referenced in the Artist's Statement. The Pareto Principle is a development idea that originated in the field of economics.

Shepherd, Edward M. *Martin Van Buren*. Houghton Mifflin, 1916.

Shepherd's biography of Martin Van Buren describes his political perception. The biography is short in length but dense in words. Shepherd does not hide any of his bias towards Van Buren, as he is clear about not liking his practices.

Sloan, Irving J. *Martin Van Buren: 1782-1862*. Oceana Publications, 1969.

Sloan's short biography of Martin Van Buren is useful for reference and includes a helpful chronology, sources, and documents.

Smiley, Sam. *Playwriting: The Structure of Action*. Prentice-Hall, 1971.

Smiley's book was helpful in the initial act of setting up the musical, especially in regard to story structure and arc.

Van Buren, Martin. *Autobiography*. Washington Government Printing Office, 1918.

Martin Van Buren's autobiography is dense and lengthy. It is useful as a primary source but was not consulted in much detail due to its extreme size.

Van Deusen, Glyndon G. *The Jacksonian Era: 1828-1848*. Harper Torchbooks, 1959.

Van Deusen focuses on the early career of Martin Van Buren as vice president under Andrew Jackson in the beginning years of the Democratic party.

Ward, John William. *Andrew Jackson: Symbol for an Age*. Oxford University Press, 1953.

Ward focuses on the early career of Martin Van Buren as vice president under Andrew Jackson in the beginning years of the Democratic party.

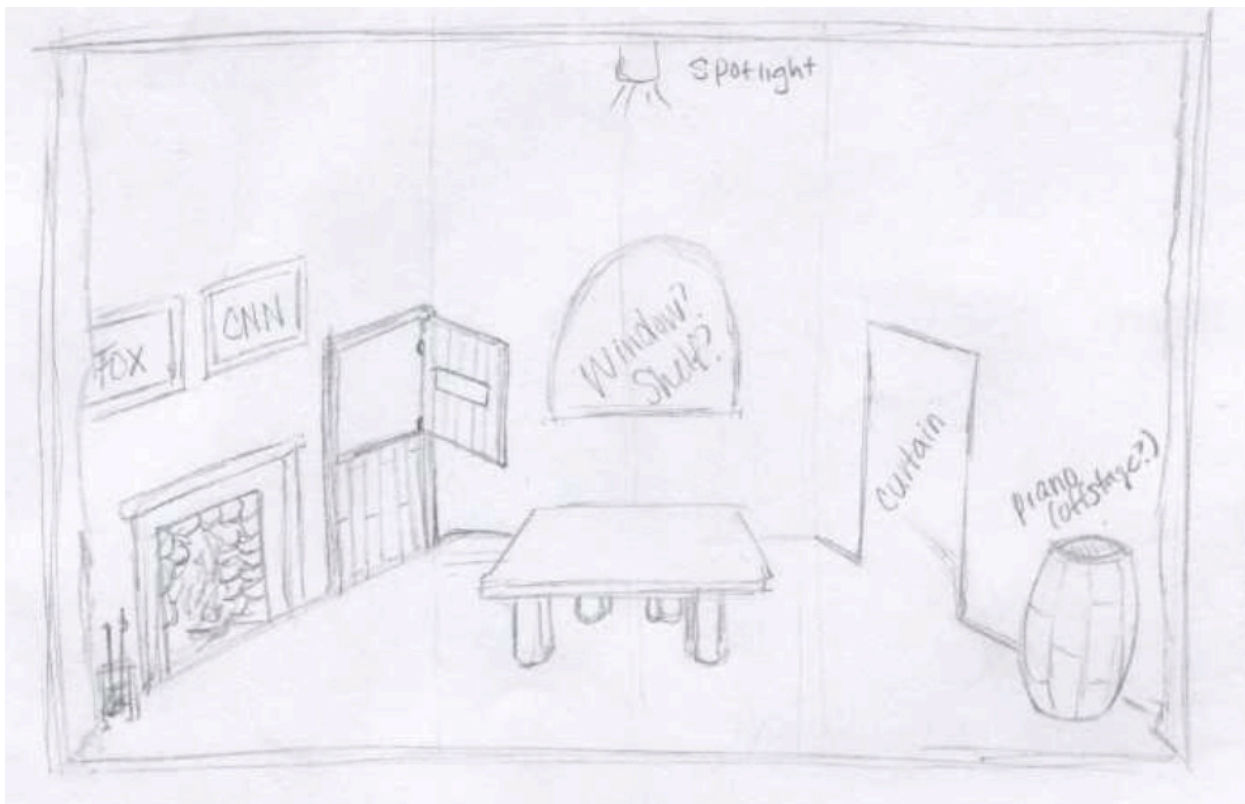
Whitney, David C. *The American Presidents, 8<sup>th</sup> ed.* Doubleday, 1993.

Whitney's collection on presidents includes a short biography of Martin Van Buren, which was useful in corroborating historical facts.

## Appendix B. Setting Sketches

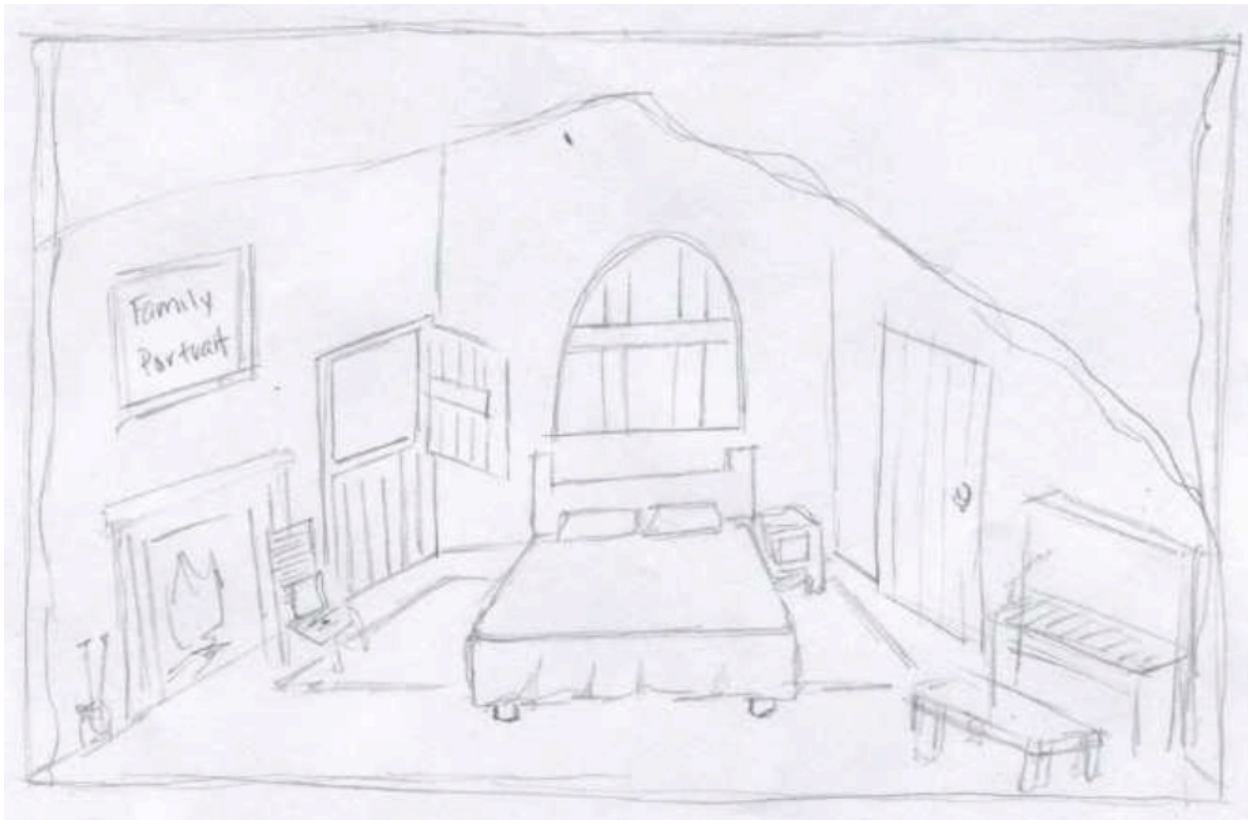
### The Tavern Scene

The Tavern Scene centers on a large table which will be surrounded by the ensemble and Martin Van Buren. Two doors on either side of the stage will allow characters to enter and exit. The door on the left side of the stage opens to a wintry outdoor setting. The door on the right side of the stage leads to a back hallway and will be partitioned by a curtain. The piano will be located at the front right of the stage, where the barrel is illustrated in this picture. Behind the table will be a shelf containing flasks and other containers for alcohol or food. A spotlight shines on each of the characters as they move through the bar. A fireplace is kept active throughout all scenes, and two televisions are set to show news stories from various news networks, such as Fox or CNN.



## The Altered Tavern Scene

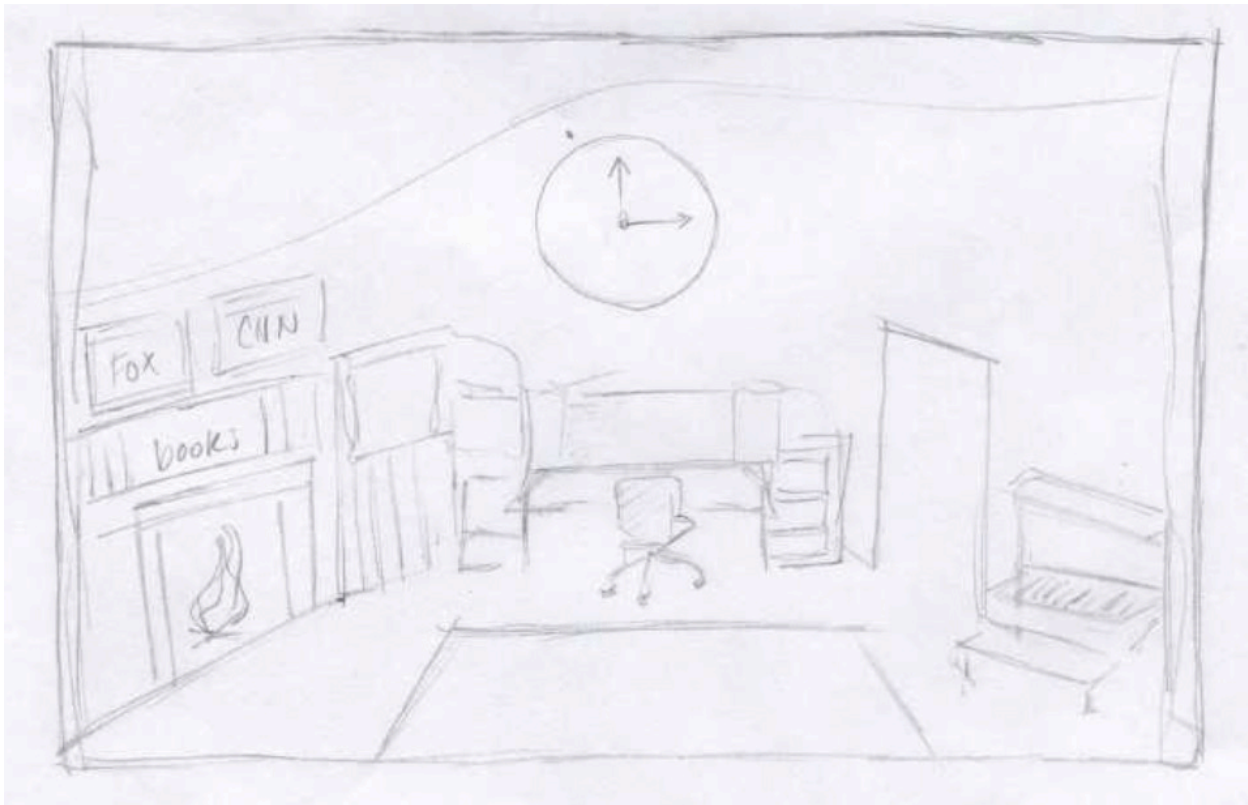
The Altered Tavern Scene will be used for many of the home scenes. The table has been replaced by a queen-sized bed, made out of a wooden platform for dancing. A nightstand sits beside the bed. A rug is laid on the floor to muffle some of the noises. A curtain will likely obscure most of the ceiling view. The exit to the right side of the stage has been covered by a wooden door frame. The television sets have been exchanged for a family portrait. A chair sits by the fireplace. The shelf from the Tavern Scene has been exchanged for a window.





## The Law and Political Offices

The Law and Political Offices will look very similar to the Tavern Scene as far as the entrances and exits. The rug from the home scene may be reused in this scene. A large clock replaces the window/shelf. The piano remains in the front right corner of the stage. A rolling chair provides a modern law office setting, while large filing cabinets scatter across the room. The televisions showing political news may remain, although there is also a row of books above the fireplace.



## **Appendix C. Character Sketches**

### **Martin Van Buren**

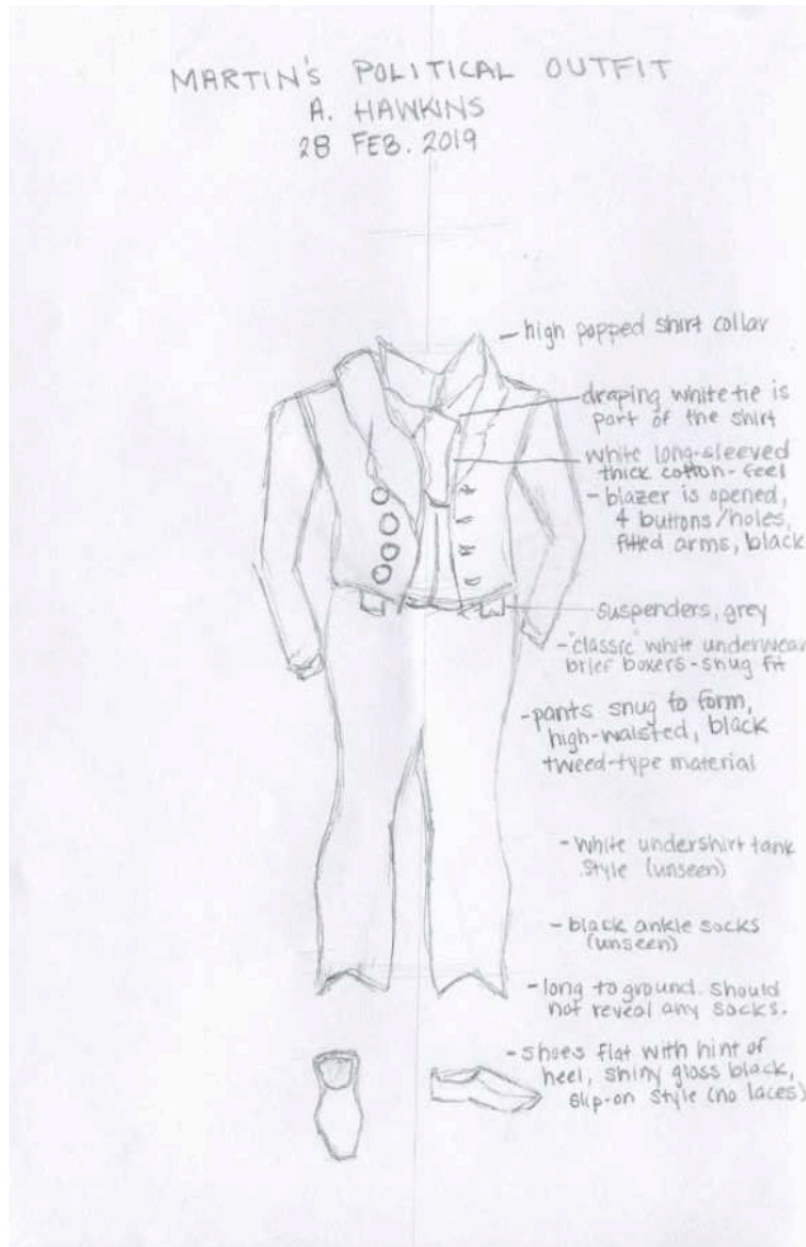
The following image shows a character sketch for Martin Van Buren. His hair color will be medium-to-dark brown. He will be balding, with a patch of hair missing from the center of his head, and a very round head underneath. For makeup, apply a thin layer of sparkle to show a glossy head. The rest of Martin's hair is bushy and curly. Use an iron and hairspray to secure tight curls, depending on the hair type cast. The hair length should be mid-length, not to exceed the collarbone or the shirt collar. Sideburns will be neat but full, to lip level. Eyebrows should be thin but masculine and curved to meet the bridge of the nose. Eyes should be green or hazel preferably, and eye shadow may be used for accent. Lips should be thin, and a light lip liner in nude color may be used if desired. Blush will be useful in accenting face color.

MARTIN POLITICAL FACE  
MAKEUP / TYPE CASTING  
A. HAWKINS  
28 FEB. 2019



- hair color: medium-to-dark brown
- balding, patch of hair, very round head on top.  
apply sparkle to ensure a glassy balding head.
- rest of hair is bushy, curly. Use iron/spray for tight curls, depending on hair type. length to midneck; collarbone (will touch popped shirt collar).
- sideburns neat but full, to lip level.
- eyebrows thin but many, very curved, to bridge of nose
- eyes green/hazel. Pronounce the lids with shadow.
- lips thin, apply liner in nude as necessary.
- light levels of blush where applicable.

## Political Outfit



## Tavern Outfit

